
BILL NO: House Bill 490
TITLE: Residential Service Agencies – Employee Registry
COMMITTEE: Health & Government Operations
HEARING DATE: February 23, 2023
POSITION: **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Across our nation, and here in Maryland in particular, families are facing a crisis of care as our loved ones grow older and the number of folks employed within the care service industry grows smaller. Currently in Maryland there is a waitlist of over 31,000 individuals for homecare and community-based services through Maryland's Medicaid program. However, due to antiquated systems and rapid changes within our populations, the state is unable to adequately determine the appropriate number of care workers needed, nor the specializations that are most in demand.

This is all particularly troubling as women continue to be disproportionately represented within the care service industry and simultaneously continue to perform most of the unpaid care for family members. The burdens and costs of this continuing crisis is felt the most by those who can afford it the least. HB490 seeks to follow the lead of other states that have created healthcare worker registries in an attempt to improve quality of care and ensure that there is a workforce of homecare workers able to meet the needs of a growing aging population in the state.

While the Women's Law Center is supportive of this goal and the implementation of a registry, it has raised concerns regarding carve-outs in the bill, as drafted, regarding survivors of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, or stalking. (See P.2, Lines 19-24). This carve-out is not necessary to protect the privacy of survivors. It is our understanding that the sponsors have drafted and are introducing language to amend HB490 to remove that section entirely. With those changes, the WLC would support the legislation in its entirety.

As such, the Women's Law Center of Maryland respectfully supports HB490 but urges a favorable report with the amendments raised above.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.